AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

1.   (Currently Amended) A method performed by a computing system for reducing unsolicited electronic messages, comprising:

acquiring a ticket from a ticketing entity, the ticket having a value specified by a sender of a message;

adding the acquired ticket to the message; and

forwarding the message with the added ticket to a recipient,

wherein upon receiving the message, the recipient can conditionally redeem the value of the ticket from the ticketing entity.

2.   (Original) The method of claim 1 wherein the acquired ticket includes a sender authenticating code so that a mail server that receives the message can authenticate the sender of the message.

3.   (Original) The method of claim 1 wherein a block of tickets is acquired at a time from the ticketing entity.

4.   (Original) The method of claim 3 wherein each ticket of the block includes a code from a sequence of codes generated from a start code using a one-way function.

5.   (Original)   The method of claim 4 wherein the tickets are added to messages in reverse order of generation of their codes.

6.   (Original) The method of claim 4 wherein a mail server is provided with an end code of the sequence of codes and determines whether a ticket of the message includes a code from which the end code can be derived.

7.　　(Original) The method of claim 1 wherein the recipient's mail system can validate the ticket with the ticketing entity before presenting the message to the recipient.

8.　　(Original) The method of claim 1 wherein the recipient's mail system can automatically discard messages with ticket values below a threshold value set by the recipient.

9.　　(Original) The method of claim 1 wherein when the recipient redeems the ticket, an account of the sender is debited.

10.　　(Original) The method of claim 1 wherein when the recipient redeems the ticket, an account of the recipient is credited.

11.　　(Original) The method of claim 1 wherein the message is an electronic mail message.

12.　　(Original) A system for reducing electronic messages, comprising:

a processor and memory;

a ticketing entity that issues tickets for use in sending electronic messages and that redeems tickets upon request;

a sender messaging system that adds issued tickets to messages sent by a sender, the sender specifying a value for each message; and

a recipient messaging system that allows a recipient to conditionally redeem tickets from the ticketing entity.

13.　　(Original) The system of claim 12 wherein a ticket that is sent by a sender includes a sender authenticating code and a sender messaging server authenticates the sender based on the sender authenticating code.

14.   (Original) The system of claim 13 wherein the sender authenticating code is one of a sequence of codes generated by a one-way function and the sender messaging server has an end code of the sequence so it can verify whether the end code can be derived from the sender authenticating code of a message.

15.   (Original) The system of claim 14 wherein the sender messaging server generates the sequence of codes and includes them in issued tickets.

16.   (Original) The system of claim 14 wherein a sender messaging client generates the sequence of codes and provides a terminal code of the sequence to the sender messaging server.

17.   (Original) The system of claim 12 wherein the recipient messaging system automatically discards messages with a ticket value less than a threshold value.

18.   (Original) The system of claim 17 wherein the tickets of the discarded messages are automatically redeemed.

19.   (Original) The system of claim 12 wherein the recipient messaging system presents messages to the recipient in an order based on the ticket values of the messages.

20.   (Original) The system of claim 12 wherein the recipient messaging system validates with the ticketing entity whether a ticket can be redeemed.

21.   (Original) The system of claim 20 wherein the recipient messaging system discards those messages whose tickets cannot be validated.

22.   (Previously Presented) A method performed by a computer system for handling electronic messages, the method comprising:

    receiving an electronic message having a ticket issued by a ticketing entity, the ticket having a value that is specified by a sender;

    presenting the electronic message to a recipient;

    when the recipient indicates to redeem the ticket, submitting the ticket to the ticketing entity for redemption wherein the ticketing entity charges the sender for a value of the ticket; and

    when the recipient does not indicate to redeem the ticket, suppressing the redeeming of the ticket

    so that a recipient can conditionally redeem tickets.

23.   (Original) The method of claim 22 wherein the redemption includes decreasing an account balance of the sender and increasing an account balance of the recipient.

24.   (Original) The method of claim 22 wherein a sender's account and a recipient's account are maintained by the same entity.

25.   (Original) The method of claim 22 wherein a sender's account and a recipient's account are maintained by different entities.

26.   (Original) The method of claim 25 wherein the entity that maintains the sender's account transfers the value to the entity that maintains the recipient's account.

27.   (Original) The method of claim 22 including validating that the ticket can be redeemed before presenting the ticket to the recipient.